

## **DROP-OFF RECYCLING PROGRAMS**

### **HELPFUL IDEAS FOR IMPROVING PARTICIPATION**

1. Drop-off recycling programs are more apt to be successful when residents, particularly in rural areas, are taking their trash to a central trash collection facility or transfer station. The collection containers for recyclables should then be located there for the convenience of the residents.
2. If a community has curbside collection of trash and cannot afford curbside collection of recyclables, a drop-off program should be considered. The drop-off locations should be located for the convenience of the residents. Locations to consider include: a) schools, b) fire station, c) post office, d) local churches, f) shopping centers and/or food centers, and g) any other area in the community that is used by a large portion of the populace.
3. The recycling program should only collect materials for which a market already exists. Do not start collecting a material in hopes that a market will soon develop. Find out who you can sell to, what materials they want, the degree of contamination they'll accept, and how they want the material processed and shipped. Estimate the potential revenue and stability of markets and then decide what items to recycle.
4. Limit materials collected in the recycling program to 4 or 5 materials for the first year. Residents tend to be confused if more materials are collected. After the program has been going well for a year or more, add 1 or 2 materials, if needed, and ensure the public is educated on the new items being collected.
5. The following items should be considered at the drop-off locations: a) secure site that is well lit for 24-hour use and can be seen by people passing by, b) clean and well maintained through periodic checks for containers overflowing with recyclables, vandalism or dumped trash, c) good on-site drainage, and d) clean recycling bins.
6. Drop-off sites should be no more than 2 miles from any user of the facility. Distribute sites geographically so that all areas of the community are adequately covered. More materials will be collected if the sites are located in high density population and high traffic areas and are highly visible to passing traffic.
7. Provide hassle-free parking and traffic flow. Allow for five cars to use the site simultaneously as well as ample space for the recycling collection truck to maneuver.
8. Be certain that the owner of the location of your drop-off center is committed to the project.
9. If the drop-off site is manned, ensure the hours are convenient to the users and well publicized. Ensure the staff is well trained in the specifics of what is accepted and not accepted.
10. The drop-off site should be well marked with attractive sign(s) identifying it as the recycling drop-off site.
11. The drop-off site should have a trash can for unacceptable items/incidental waste and to help reduce litter. This trash can is vital to help reduce contaminants. Contaminants may include plastic bags used to bring the recyclables to the site, unacceptable plastic bottles and non-container plastics. If a trash bin is not there for these materials, people may put them in the plastic recycling bins for the community to separate and then dispose.
12. Public education is the key to a successful program. The public's understanding of material requirements can make or break a drop-off program. People must be thoroughly familiar with the specific materials wanted before they arrive at the site, or they may deposit unacceptable materials just to avoid taking them back home for disposal. To get the information out about the recycling program, use radio and TV spots, newspaper ads and articles, and billboard ads; visit and give presentations to neighborhood associations, schools, churches and civic organizations to promote and explain the program; put quarterly flyers, leaflets and/or newsletters in the water/sewer bill, bank statement or by separate mailing by the water/sewer department; train community volunteers on program so they educate neighbors and others; produce video on local waste management/ recycling program and provide video free to video stores and setup a display information booth on weekends at the local malls,

discount stores and/or food centers. Whatever the means of getting the information out, ensure that the material explains a) what is being collected, b) where the drop-off locations are located, c) preparation instructions, d) time and day when the drop-off site is open, and e) who to contact if you have questions. Simple, active language and simple line graphics in the printed material is very important. Continuous education is critical if the recycling program is to be successful. Education of the residents should begin 3 months before the recycling program begins and continue quarterly. Contact MDEQ for samples of educational flyers and leaflets.

13. Offer incentives for recycling such as lower garbage collection fees. The community may ultimately want to consider a variable rate or volume base solid waste fee. Example: The resident has the option of using a 30, 60 or 90 gallon trash can, with the cost of service for each being \$5, \$10, and \$15, respectively. If you recycle, you may only need the use of the smallest trash bin, thereby saving on your monthly trash disposal bill.
14. Maintain reliable service and pickup of materials at the drop-off stations. Overflowing and dirty recycling bins are unsightly and negatively effect participation in the program.
15. Instructions on the recycling bins should be attractive, clear, simple and well marked so to identify what materials are acceptable for going into the containers. Large signs and large lettering are suggested. Avoid using technical information. Instead, specify exactly what materials are accepted. Use graphics or physical examples to illustrate what is accepted and not accepted. Provide a telephone number for questions and comments on the program.
16. Ensure that the community has insurance coverage to protect the site owner from liability.
17. Consider entering into a cooperative advertising agreement with local businesses to adopt drop-off sites or advertise at the sites to help reduce cost and/or bring in additional revenue to the program.
18. An anti-scavenging ordinance should be passed prior to the start of the recycling program.
19. Community provided home collection/storage containers for recyclables will help increase the participation in a drop-off recycling program.
20. Organize an intensive kickoff campaign for the entire community or for the area served by the drop-off facility.

Some of the underlying causes of high contamination include 1) people frequently misinterpreted the signs because the wording was unclear, 2) people placed unacceptable materials in the recyclables bin because no disposal container was available, and 3) people found heavy container lids awkward to hold open while attempting to place individual bottles and containers inside so it was easier to toss the whole bundle in along with the bag/box.

Look into organizing a recycling cooperative in your area. The reason for it is that if you can put 20 tons or more of clean recyclable material on a truck, someone will buy it. Joint efforts with other communities and/or counties may ensure that you collect sufficient quantity of materials. In addition, there must be sufficient coordination of shipping and processing of the materials. Quality and quantity are important keys to recycling.

The cost of recycling almost always exceeds the revenue earned from the sale of recyclables. But a combination of revenues, avoided landfill tipping fees and extending the life of the landfill, should equal or exceed the cost of running a recycling program.

## **MECHANICS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM**

- ( Commitment and initiative at the highest level of local government
- ( Innovative and consistent education and communication with all affected parties
- ( Public works support, including monitoring and follow-up
- ( Equipment and facilities in place to enable efficient material handling and product flow
- ( Don't just talk about it. Take action and do it!

**If you have any questions regarding recycling programs, equipment needs, and/or markets, please call the Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Program at the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) at 601/961-5171.**